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Travel Montana UPDATE

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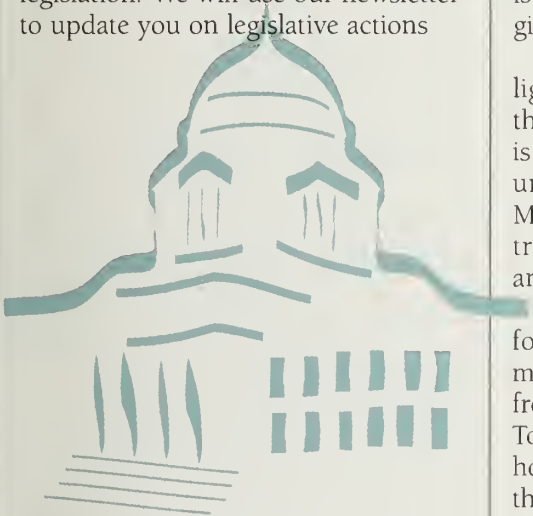
1999 Montana Legislature Underway

The 56th Montana Legislature is in session. Prior to its opening, well over 1300 requests for bill drafts were submitted by lawmakers. Legislation to enact the Bed Tax Futures Task Force recommendations approved by the Tourism Advisory Council and Governor were among these requests as were other ideas for changing Montana's 4% tourism "bed tax" legislation. We will use our newsletter to update you on legislative actions



regarding Montana's tourism development and promotion efforts. You can also follow the legislature's progress through the State of Montana's website: state.mt.us.

The Silver Anniversary Governor's Tourism Conference Getting Ready For You!

Montana's tourism partners will be "Celebrating Silver, Going for the Gold" at the 1999 Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation scheduled for Helena's Colonial Inn March 29-30. The conference theme acknowledges that this is Montana's 25th annual tourism conference.

Registration costs for the two-day conference remain the same as last year: $110 per person for registration prior to March 11; $130 for those registering between March 11-24; and $150 after March 24. To register, contact Helena's RMS Management Services, 443-1160, FAX 443-4614, E-mail: sueweingartner@compuserve.com. It is not too early to get signed up, so give them a call.

In future newsletters we will highlight the conference presenters and their topics. Generally, the agenda is designed to help attendees better understand emerging world and Montana tourism market and industry trends as well as tourism issues around Montana.

A departure from tradition planned for the 1999 conference involves making Monday night, March 29, free time for attendees. The Montana Tourism Coalition (MTC) will hold a dinner theater/auction at the Colonial this night. Tickets are $25/person prior to March 26, $30 afterward. For reservations, call MTC's Amy Sullivan, 443-7838. The Helena Area CVB will also provide attraction, restaurant and activity information packets to help attendees plan an evening elsewhere around the Capitol City.

Warm Season Print Ad Campaign Set To Go

This winter and spring, a "Put Yourself In Montana" invitation will be extended to over 37.8 million people reading 56 different national magazines. Travel Montana's "warm season" print ad campaign has separate themes focused on Montana's traditional markets, emerging markets, and niche markets like photography, mature travelers, western history/ culture, outdoor enthusiasts, RV/ camping and golf.

During this same period, another 5.4 million readers will receive Montana and Wyoming's invitation to ask "your boss for another week off" to visit our region. The Montana/ Wyoming cooperative campaign highlights the two states' national parks: Grand Teton, Yellowstone and Glacier. The cooperative partners include the states of Montana, Wyoming, AMFAC (Yellowstone's concessioner) and the Grand Teton Lodging Company.

Warm Season Ad Campaign Conversion Study On Website

How many people come to Montana after responding to our print ad invitations? According to a recent study of Montana's 1998 Warm Season ad campaign, about 24%. In this study, Clearwater Research Inc of Boise, ID, found that these visitors stayed an average 5-7 nights and spent between $92 and $161 per day in Montana. The best conversion rate for paid advertising came from Mass Media placements; just over 25% of inquiries from these publications became Montana visitors. Western History and Culture publication respondents converted into Montana travelers at a rate of 24.7%, followed by Active Mature at a 22.7% rate.

The study has lots more information about the 1998 ad campaign's costs, individual publication performance, visitor expenditures and characteristics about Montana's visitors. You can view the report on the Internet at <travelmontana.state.mt.us/research>. Results of this conversion study will also be presented at our March Governor's Conference.

Super Savings On Winter Website

Travel Montana's winter website <wintermt.com> is offering savings on your next Montana ski area visit. As a new website feature, many of Montana's ski areas are offering discount coupons covering everything from reduced lift ticket prices to ski/lodging packages.

Big Sky Hosts RMI Winter Round Up

Between 30-40 European tour operators are expected at the RMI Winter Round-Up scheduled for Big Sky Ski Resort Jan. 26-29. Overseas Marketing Manager Pam Gosink strongly urges Montana suppliers with winter travel product to attend the Round Up. Contact Pam at 444-2654 or RMI at 307-637-4977. Following the Round Up, some tour operators will visit West Yellowstone, Yellowstone Park, Big Sky and Bridger Bowl.

Havre, Broadus & Laurel Put CTAP Grants To Work

Havre, Broadus and Laurel are moving forward on tourism infrastructure projects resulting from their 1997/98 Community Tourism Assessment Program (CTAP) work. All three communities are receiving $20,000 tourism "bed tax" grants from Travel Montana. Havre plans to expand its Havre Beneath the Streets attraction and upgrade facilities at the newly opened Heritage Center.

Broadus is developing an outdoor equipment display area at the Powder River County Historical Museum. Laurel is investing their CTAP grant into an expansion/signage project at their log cabin visitor information center. The CTAP process has been used by 15 Montana communities which have received $240,000 in "bed tax" funds their local tourism-related projects.

Help Train The Travel Counselors

Seven travel counselors employed by MARS Stout's Missoula "call center" are at the front lines of Montana's effort to help visitors gather good information for planning their Montana vacation.

These are the folks that answer Montana's 1-800-VISIT MT phone lines. Information Services Coordinator Thurston Elfstrom says there are a number of ways Montana's tourism industry partners can help the counselors know what Montana has to offer. Recently, Russell Country staff and board members organized, sponsored and led a 4-day familiarization tour involving four of the call center staff. Others have provided counselor training at the Missoula offices. Thurston says both office and site visit training are extremely beneficial. If you want to help the counselors, contact Thurston at 444-2654 or E-mail: thurston@visitmt.com.

Travel Montana Staff Changes

Cultural Tourism Specialist Shari Nault Pullar has left Travel Montana for career pursuits in the Seattle area. Communities, organizations and tribes that Shari worked with over the last few years are expressing sorrow at her departure. That is echoed by Travel Montana. Thanks and good luck, Shari!

Rachel Irving is the new administrative assistant for Travel Montana's director. Montana raised, she has a nine year old daughter and most recently worked with the state's health and human service agency. Welcome Rachel!

Travel Montana Calendar

January	
13	MTRI Research Focus Team Mtg.,Helena
21-31	Sundance Film Festival, Park City, UT
26	MTRI Electronic Media Focus Team Mtg, Helena
26-29	RMI Winter Round Up, Big Sky
30-Feb. 3	Post Round Up MT FAM
February	
1-2	Tourism Advisory Council Mtg, Great Falls

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